

Remarks Prior to Discussions With Members of the Community in Islamabad

March 4, 2006

Secretary Rice and Ambassador Crocker and I want to thank members from the civil society and Members of Parliament for joining us. My trip to Pakistan is a really important trip. Pakistan is a strategic partner and a friend of the United States.

I want to thank those of you who have come to share with me and the Secretary and the Ambassador your thoughts about how the United States can better work with the people of Pakistan.

One of the signs of a modern society is the empowerment of women. And I want to thank the women who have joined us here today to share your thoughts. And

we've got the head of a bank; we've got a Member of Parliament; we've got educators, heads of NGOs, businesspeople, that are all here to help us better understand the Pakistan society and how we can better interrelate.

Part of becoming closer friends is to listen, listen to concerns and to share our thoughts on common values. So we really want to thank you for being here. And thank you for your gracious hospitality to your country.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:25 p.m. at the U.S. Embassy.

Joint Statement by President George W. Bush and President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan: United States-Pakistan Strategic Partnership

March 4, 2006

President Bush and President Musharraf have affirmed the long-term, strategic partnership between their two countries. In 2004, the United States acknowledged its aspirations for closer bilateral ties with Pakistan by designating Pakistan as a Major Non-NATO Ally. The U.S.-Pakistan strategic partnership is based on the shared interests of the United States and Pakistan in building stable and sustainable democracy and in promoting peace and security, stability, prosperity, and democracy in South Asia and across the globe.

The two leaders are determined to strengthen the foundation for a strong, stable, and enduring relationship. This will require a significant expansion of U.S.-Pakistan bilateral economic ties, including mutual trade and investment. As a key step in this direction the United States and Pakistan are making meaningful progress to-

ward concluding a Bilateral Investment Treaty.

Both leaders commit to working together with Afghanistan to make Pakistan and Afghanistan a land bridge linking the economic potentials of South Asia and Central Asia.

The American people feel profound sympathy for the victims of the tragic earthquake that struck on October 8, 2005. President Bush reaffirmed the United States' determination to stand by the Pakistani people as they recover and rebuild.

President Bush and President Musharraf reaffirm their condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. Following the September 11 attacks, the United States and Pakistan joined international efforts to fight the scourge of terrorism. President Bush is grateful for President Musharraf's strong and vital support in the